

LITHIUM POLYMER BATTERY

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a lithium (Li) polymer battery, and more particularly, to a Li polymer battery having an ^{improved} ~~enhanced~~ negative plate structure.

2. Description of the Related Art

A rechargeable secondary battery is widely used in portable wireless electric apparatus such as a camcorder, cellular phones and lap-top computers. There are various secondary batteries including a nickel-cadmium (Ni-Cd) battery, a lead acid battery, a nickel metal hydride (Ni-MH) battery, a lithium (Li) ion battery, a Li polymer battery, a metal Li secondary battery and the like.

In particular, the metal Li secondary battery has a driving voltage of 3.6 V, a life span longer than that of the Ni-Cd battery or the Ni-MH battery, and high energy density to weight ratio, so its use is gradually expanding.

The Li secondary battery is classified into a Li-ion battery using a liquid electrolyte and a Li polymer battery using a polymer solid electrolyte, according to the type of electrolyte. The Li polymer battery can be embodied into various shapes as opposed to the Li-ion battery, and has merits of high stability and lightweight.

^{Fig. 1A and 1B show}
~~FIG. 1 shows~~ the structure of a Bellcore Li polymer battery, a type of a Li polymer battery. Referring to ^{Fig. 1A and 1B} ~~FIG. 1~~, a positive plate 11 and a negative plate 12 are stacked with a separator 13 interposed therebetween, each having a multilayered structure. The positive plate 11 consists of a positive collector 11a having a plurality of openings h1, and positive sheets 11b attached to both surfaces of the positive collector 11a. Also, the negative plate 12 consists of a negative collector 12a having a plurality of openings h2 and negative sheets 12b attached to both surfaces of the negative collector 12a. The positive and negative collectors 11a and 12a are formed of expanded metal.

A manufacturing process of the Bellcore Li polymer battery having the above structure will be described.

5 First, acetone as a solvent, a positive or negative active material, a binder, a conductive material and a plasticizer are mixed to prepare a slurry. Then the slurry is deposited on a polyethylene (PET) base film by ~~a doctor-blade method~~ ^{with a doctor blade} to form a thin sheet, the PET base film is removed to obtain an electrode sheet formed of the corresponding active material. Then, both surfaces of the electrode sheets are laminated to each collector at a high temperature by applying pressure, and then cut to a predetermined size.

10 The resulting positive and negative plates 11 and 12 are combined with the separator 13 interposed therebetween, and the stacked structure is laminated ~~further~~ ^{further} at a high temperature by applying pressure, thereby resulting in a bi-cell structure. Then, the bi-cell structure is soaked in ether to extract the plasticizer. Then an electrode assembly is formed having a 9 layer bi-cell structure. Then, positive and negative terminals are welded onto the assembly, and electrolyte is infiltrated into the empty space from which the plasticizer has been extracted. Finally, a casing is formed around the resulting product.

15 In the conventional Li polymer battery completed by the above method, the positive and negative collectors 11a and 12a require the openings h1 and h2 through which the plasticizer is extracted, so manufacturing the positive and negative collectors 11a and 12a is complicated. Also, adhesive forces between the positive collector 11a and the positive sheets 11b and between the negative collector 12a and the negative sheets 12b become weak due to ~~burn~~ ^{burning} generated during the formation of the openings h1 and h2. In addition, the thicknesses of the positive and negative plates 11 and 12 are nonuniform.

20 Also, when attaching the electrode sheets 11b and 12b to the positive and negative collectors 11a and 12a, respectively, bubbles may form in the spaces between the sheet and collector due to the openings h1 and h2, thereby lowering conductivity of the positive and negative collectors 11a and 12a.

25 Also, the expanded metal forming the positive and negative collectors 11a and 12a is supplied in a roll having a width of less than 300mm. The expanded metal has the property of being extendible in a longitudinal direction by force. Thus, it is difficult to manufacture the positive and negative collectors 11a and 12a through a continuous process by applying tensile strength.

In general, the material of the collectors determine the cost of the battery. Thus, using the expanded metal as a material for the collectors increases the cost of the battery, compared to using punched metal.

Also, as the expanded metal is mechanically processed, the metal itself is subject to stress. That is, when the expanded metal is cut in a predetermined size, fine powder of arsenic acid is separated from the collector made of the expanded metal. Also, because the collector made of the expanded metal is in the form of a mesh, burr is generated due to expansion of strands in the mesh, thereby causing an electrical short circuit.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

To solve the above problems, it is an object of the present invention to provide a lithium (Li) polymer battery in which a negative collector is ~~formed in a foil form~~ without openings, thereby improving the performance of plates and the productivity of the battery.

Accordingly, to achieve the above object, there is provided a lithium (Li) polymer battery comprising: a positive plate including a positive collector having a plurality of openings and a positive active material layer ~~formed on~~ at least one surface of the positive collector; a negative plate including a negative collector in a foil form, and a negative active material layer ~~formed on~~ at least on surface of the negative collector; and a separator between the positive and negative plates, for insulating the positive and negative plates.

Preferably, the negative collector is ~~formed of~~ a copper (Cu) foil.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The above object and advantages of the present invention will become more apparent by describing in detail preferred embodiments thereof with reference to the attached drawings in which:

Fig. 1A and 1B are partial sectional views of an electrode assembly of a conventional lithium (Li) polymer battery;

FIG. 2 is an exploded perspective view of a Li polymer battery according to the present invention; and

Fig. 3A and 3B are

~~FIG. 3 is a partial sectional view of an electrode assembly shown in FIG. 2.~~

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring to FIG. 2, a lithium (Li) polymer battery according to the present invention comprises an electrode assembly 20, a lower case 31 having a receiving portion 32 for holding the electrode assembly 20, and an upper case 33 which covers the receiving portion 32 to seal the electrode assembly 20.

The electrode assembly 20 is formed by repeatedly stacking a positive plate 21 and a negative plate 22 with a separator 23 interposed therebetween, and positive taps 26a and negative taps 24a are extended from the positive plates 21 and the negative plates 22, respectively.

The positive taps 26a and the negative taps 24a form a positive tap bundle 26 and a negative tap bundle 24 respectively, which are connected to a positive terminal 25 and a negative terminal 27 respectively. The positive terminal 25 and the negative terminal 27 are drawn out of the case when the electrode assembly 20 is put in the receiving portion 32 of the lower case 31 and the receiving portion 32 is then covered by the upper case 33.

Referring to ~~FIG. 3~~, the positive plate 21 consists of a positive collector 21a having a plurality of openings H and a positive active material layer 21b ~~formed on~~ at least one surface of the positive collector 21a. Also, the negative plate 22 consists of a negative collector 22a in a foil form and a negative active material layer 22b ~~formed on~~ at least one surface of the negative collector 22a. The positive plate 21 is combined with the negative plate 22 with the separator 23 interposed therebetween in order to insulate the plates 21 and 22, forming a cell. Then, such a cell is repeatedly stacked to form the electrode assembly 20.

According to the present invention, preferably, the negative collector 22a is ~~formed of~~ a copper (Cu) foil without openings, and the positive collector 21a is ~~formed of~~ expanded metal or punched metal containing aluminum (Al), and has a plurality of openings H.

The positive plate 21 and the negative plate 22 are obtained by depositing a positive active material slurry and a negative active material slurry on both surfaces of positive collector 21a and negative collector 22a respectively. The negative

active material slurry is prepared by dissolving (10% total volume) polyvinylidene fluoride (PVDF) as a binder in N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone (NMP) and adding (18% total volume) plasticizer, (2% total volume) carbon black as a conductive material and (70% total volume) carbon as a negative active material to the solution, and then stirring the mixture until it reaches a viscosity of 20,000~30,000 centipoise (cps).

Also, the positive active material slurry is prepared by dissolving (10% total volume) PVDF as a binder in acetone, adding (15~18% total volume) plasticizer, (2~5% total volume) carbon black as a conductive material and (70% total volume) LiCoO_2 as a positive active material to the solution, and then stirring the mixture until it reaches a viscosity of 20,000cps.

Preferably, the prepared negative and positive active material slurries are directly ^{Applied to} ~~coated on~~ both surfaces of the respective negative and positive collectors 22a and 21a ~~by the Doctor-blade method.~~

According to another preferred embodiment, a positive active material slurry is prepared by dissolving (10% total volume) PVDF as a binder in acetone, adding (15~18% total volume) plasticizer, (2~5% total volume) carbon black as a conductive material and (70% total volume) LiCoO_2 as a positive active material to the solution, and then stirring the mixture until it reaches a viscosity of 20,000cps.

Also, a negative active material slurry is prepared by dissolving (10% total volume) PVDF as a binder in acetone, adding (15~18% total volume) plasticizer, (2~5% total volume) carbon black as a conductive material and (70% total volume) carbon as a negative active material to the solution, and then stirring the mixture until it reaches a viscosity of 20,000cps.

Then, the prepared positive and negative active material slurries are made into thin sheets, e.g., ~~by the Doctor-blade method,~~ and then the resulting sheets are attached to both surfaces of the respective positive and negative collectors 21a and 22a.

The amount of the materials contained in the positive and negative active material slurries can be varied without limitation to the ^{described} ~~above~~ embodiments.

According to the present invention, the Cu foil without openings is adopted as the negative collector 22a, so that electrical conductivity is improved, adhesive force during the laminating on the negative collector 22a with the active material layer 22b

is strong, and the thickness of the negative plate is uniform. Also, generation of ^Aburr or bubbles between the conventional negative collector and negative sheet, caused by the openings, can be prevented.

In addition, even though the negative collector 22a has no openings, the plasticizer contained in the negative plate 22 and the separator 23 can be extracted through the openings H of the positive collector 21a in the direction indicated by the arrows in FIG. 3^{3b}.

Such effect of the present invention can be understood more fully through the following experiments.

[Experimental Example 1]

The amount of plasticizer extracted from the conventional battery adopting the negative collector 12a which is made of ~~a Cu expanded metal~~^{Cu} and has openings was compared with that of the battery adopting ~~a Cu foil as the negative collector~~ 22a according to the present invention. Here, each electrode assembly had a 9-layer bi-cell structure, and (15% total volume) the plasticizer was used for the preparation.

As a result, the amount of plasticizer extracted from the conventional battery was approximately 3.4801g, and that from the battery according to the present invention was approximately 3.4526g, which were nearly the same. That is, it can be understood that the amount of plasticizer extracted from the battery is not decreased even though the Cu foil without openings is adopted as a negative collector.

[Experimental Example 2]

A positive sheet having a thickness of approximately $80\mu\text{m}$ and a negative sheet having a thickness of approximately $120\mu\text{m}$ were respectively attached to the positive collector 21a ^{of} ~~formed of an Al expanded metal~~, and the negative collector 22a ^{the} ~~formed of a Cu foil~~ having a thickness of $20\mu\text{m}$, to obtain a battery according to the present invention. Then, ^{the} ~~resistance of the battery was measured and then~~ compared with that of the conventional battery.

As a result, the resistance of the battery according to the present invention was 50~60mΩ while that of the conventional battery was 80~100mΩ. That is, it can be understood that the electrical conductivity of the Li polymer battery according to the present invention increases as the contact area between the electrode negative sheet and the negative collector increases.

Also, the adhesive force of the negative plate was increased to 18gf/mm² or more compared to 10gf/mm² of the conventional negative plate. As a result, the life span of the battery was increased by approximately 7% or more with respect to the conventional battery, and the energy density of the battery increased by 5~10%.

In addition, because a foil having a comparatively large tensile strength is used as a negative collector, manufacturing through continuous process is possible. Also, the negative active material slurry can be ^{Applied directly to} ~~coated directly onto~~ the negative collector, so that manufacture of the plate is simplified.